

In October 1995, Duke Law School unveiled its World Wide Web site — [www.law.duke.edu](http://www.law.duke.edu) — with great fanfare. Since then, the site has appeared in a program at the spring 1996 alumni weekend and was announced in the *Duke Law Magazine*. Its primary Internet address is highlighted in the Law School letterhead and print publications.

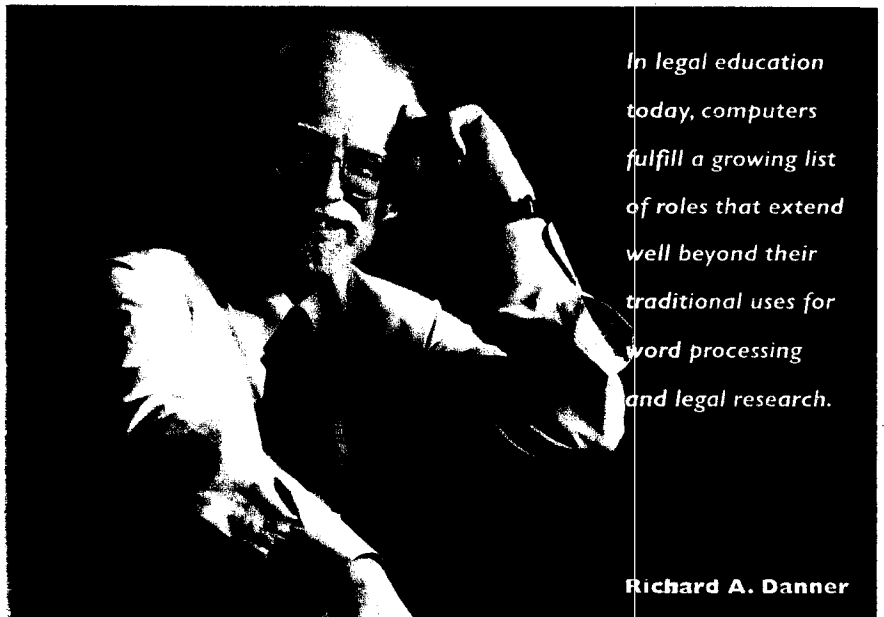
Why do we think the Law School's presence on the Web is important? Why should Duke or any other law school invest its resources in developing a space on the Internet? How will the Web site

do with computers at Duke in 1997, the word would be — *communicate*. We rely on computers for correspondence between faculty colleagues, announcements to students, transmission of scholarly information to a co-author at another school, answers to questions of prospective students, information regarding on-site interviewing procedures for visiting law firms, announcements of upcoming conferences at the Law School and contacts with alumni of the Law School.

Each Law School course now has its own e-mail discussion group, which stu-

# WHY THE WEB?

BY RICHARD A. DANNER



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**Richard A. Danner**

benefit alumni, prospective students, friends of the School and others interested in Duke's programs, conferences and publications? How will this and other technologies help us improve our educational programs and enhance the sense of community among current Duke law students, faculty and staff? For the Law School, as for other educational institutions, the World Wide Web poses a variety of questions, because it creates so many possibilities and opportunities.

In legal education today, computers fulfill a growing list of roles that extend well beyond their traditional uses for word processing and legal research. But, if you had to capture in one word what we

students can use to ask questions of their professors and which the faculty can use to raise topics for out-of-class discussion, make announcements and distribute materials to their students. Most administrative communications and announcements for faculty, students and staff are made using e-mail or postings on the Web site. Not everyone on the faculty uses word processing for writing; nor does everyone use Lexis or Westlaw for research; but nearly everyone uses e-mail on a regular basis for communications within the building, with others on campus and with colleagues at other law schools both within the U.S. and abroad. The student network has so much e-mail

traffic that the Duke Bar Association recently announced guidelines to improve the efficiency of the system. Our Law School community newsletter, *The Herald*, is now primarily an e-mail publication, with older issues archived on the Web site. Many faculty and staff dial-in to the Law School networks from home or while traveling.

Increasingly, communications of all of these kinds and more, both within the Law School and beyond, will be accomplished not only with e-mail but through the Law School Web site. Why the Web? We believe that most members of the Law School community — prospective students, current students, faculty and staff, and both recent and older graduates — are likely to become Web users (if they are not already) and will appreciate the improvements in communications that creative development of our Web site will bring. We are already a community highly skilled in using computers and computer networks professionally and increasingly for other purposes as well. Those of us who are current or prospective law students have worked with computers throughout our earlier educations; those now at Duke use them on a daily basis; graduates of the Law School use computers in firms or other professional settings. All of us who have children are pulled into using technology at home, whether we wish to or not. And if we use computers, we will be using the Web because it is everywhere; it is easy to use; and it allows us to communicate with each other in new and better ways.

We look to the Law School Web site to serve a wide range of purposes for the School and its community. In addition to internal communications, we see major roles for the Web in facilitating communications with the Law School's external constituencies; providing a medium for electronic publishing of scholarship; supporting the curriculum and other educational programs; and aiding research. Some of the more exciting immediate benefits of Web development will be in communicating with a range of outside

constituencies and in facilitating the publication of scholarship.

#### EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Web site allows us to offer both a comprehensive picture of the School to anyone wishing to learn more about us, help in finding specific information quickly and a way to follow up and contact us about their interest. The information on the Web site should always be more up-to-date than in our printed brochures and the Law School bulletin, and the workings of the Web should allow visitors to the site easily to find what they need without wading through information they are not interested in.

Thus, a college senior linked to the Internet through a connection in a dorm room across the country can visit our admissions page to find current information about the Law School's programs, admissions procedures and financial aid. She can learn about the backgrounds of current students, find out how to contact current students to ask questions about Duke, send e-mail to the admissions office and move beyond the admissions page to get a picture of student life at the School, information about the faculty, special programs, library and resources, and information about the University, Durham and the region. International applicants can obtain the same information from throughout the world and communicate, through the site, with our international admissions officers. The site already provides pictures of the School and in the future will no doubt provide sound and video as well.

Similarly, an alumnus can enter the site through the alumni connections page and immediately find out the latest news about fellow classmates, read articles about prominent alumni in the news, learn about upcoming events for alumni and conferences at the Law School and read the articles and features published in the Duke Law Magazine.

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#### ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING

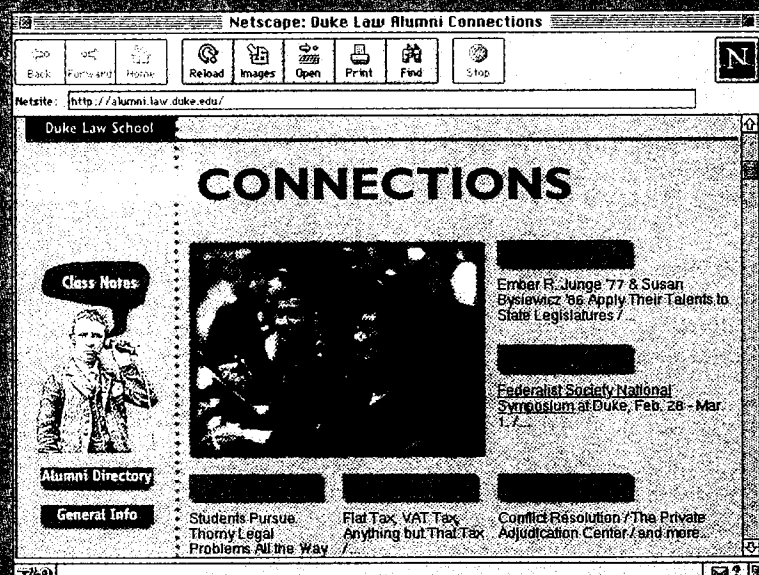
A large part of the Law School's mission is to foster research and scholarship and to publish and distribute the

work of our own faculty and students and that of scholars from other institutions. Traditionally, our publishing activities have focused on the print editions of the *Duke Law Journal*, *Law & Contemporary Problems* and the several specialized student-edited journals that have begun publication in recent years.

Increasingly, however, as access to the World Wide Web becomes more widespread, the Web can be seen as a publication and distribution medium with benefits and efficiencies that make Web publication attractive as an alternative or a substitute for the print law journal. Web versions of articles will go through the same selection and editorial processes as print articles but once approved for publication can be quickly mounted on the

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Web site and made available without printers' delays. Once on the Web, articles can be easily downloaded or printed in formats similar in appearance to the traditional journal article, and they can be prepared to take advantage of Web technology, using hypertext capabilities to organize the text and to create direct links to the texts of sources cited in footnotes.

Presently at Duke, abstracts of articles in the *Duke Law Journal* can be found on the Law School Web site as can the full text of articles from the *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy*, both the result of student initiatives. Professor John Weistart chairs a faculty-student committee charged with facilitating a more comprehensive Web presence for the journals and with developing new forms of scholarly publication that take advantage of Web technology and links to information stored around the world.

Mark Stefik, the author of the new book, *Internet Dreams*, argues that how we begin thinking about new phenomena such as the Internet and the Web when their role in society is undefined and evolving has a major effect on what they actually become. He explores several metaphors frequently seen in current thinking about the Internet: Should we think of it as a library and a place for publication and distribution of information? Is it a place for commerce and a vehicle for marketing and promotion of goods and services? Is it a place to explore digital worlds and virtual realities? Or is it primarily a communications medium? With the development and accessibility of local and global computer networks, it's hard to argue that communication is not at the heart of everything we do with computers, the Internet and the World Wide Web. Communication is certainly at the heart of what we do at the Law School, and creative use of these new tools will improve our abilities to communicate. Watch our Web site and see what happens.